

**Response Under 37 CFR 1.116**

**Expedited Procedure**

**Examining Group 1761**

Application No. 10/035,487

Paper Dated: December 2, 2004

In Reply to USPTO Correspondence of August 2, 2004

Attorney Docket No. 388-011772

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims**

1. (Currently Amended): A method of processing starch grain material ~~for use in a fermenting process subsequently thereto, comprising the steps of:~~

~~conveying starch grain material on a belt formed of a mesh material and during at least a portion of the conveying step:~~

i) ~~irradiating microwave to the starch grain material under a dry state thereof; and~~

ii) ~~feeding hot air current through the mesh belt, such that the starch grain material is maintained at 50 to 120°C~~

a microwave irradiating step for irradiating microwave to rice grains as the starch grain material under a dry state thereof while the material is being conveyed on a belt formed of a mesh material with keeping the vicinity of the material at 50 to 120°C by means of a hot air current fed through the mesh belt,

wherein in a subsequent fermenting process, the starch grain material obtained from said microwave irradiating step is used directly as sake-brewing rice without being subjected to a water-soaking step, steaming step, liquefying step or roasting step.

2.-3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended): A method of manufacturing a fermented product, comprising ~~the steps of:~~

~~conveying starch grain material on a belt formed of a mesh material and during at least a portion of the conveying step:~~

i) ~~irradiating microwave to the starch grain material under a dry state thereof; and~~

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ii) ~~feeding hot air current through the mesh belt, such that the starch grain material is maintained at 50 to 120°C;~~  
~~fermenting the starch grain material to obtain the fermented product~~  
~~a microwave irradiating step for irradiating microwave to rice grains as the starch grain material under a dry state thereof while the material is being conveyed on a belt formed of a mesh material with keeping the vicinity of the material at 50 to 120°C by means of a hot air current fed through the mesh belt; and~~  
~~a fermenting step for fermenting the starch grain material obtained from the microwave irradiating step, thereby to obtain the fermented product,~~  
~~wherein in the subsequent fermenting process, the starch grain material obtained from said microwave irradiating step is used directly as sake-brewing rice without being subjected to a water-soaking step, steaming step, liquefying step or roasting step.~~

5.-7. (Cancelled).